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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

*Memorandum*



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600  
8 November 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
FURTHER DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION  
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HIGHLIGHTS

After a weekend of heavy fighting near the Vietnamese Special Forces camp at Plei Me, battalion-strength Viet Cong forces have apparently broken contact with elements of the 1st Brigade/US 1st Cavalry Division. In North Vietnam, carrier-based navy aircraft attacked a SAM site some 60 miles east of Hanoi. According to pilot reports, the attack heavily damaged four missiles, four missile launchers and several buildings.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:  
Battalion-strength Viet Cong forces have apparently broken contact with elements of 1st Brigade/US 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) after a weekend of heavy fighting near the Vietnamese Special Forces camp at Plei Me, in Pleiku Province (Para. 1). Operation HUMP, a search-and-destroy ground sweep initiated on 5 November in Bien Hoa Province by paratroop elements of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade and one Australian infantry battalion established heavy contact yesterday with an estimated Viet Cong battalion near the guerrilla-infested War Zone "D" stronghold (Para. 2). In Binh Thuan Province, a Communist force estimated at one battalion yesterday attacked and temporarily overran a government hamlet near the district town of Hai Ninh, inflicting heavy casualties on the garrison's 75 paramilitary defenders (Para. 3). Additional information has been reported in the press concerning the defection of a North Vietnamese political commissar to American forces near Plei Me on 7 November (Paras. 4-5).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: Premier Ky departed on schedule today for his four-day official visit to South Korea (Para. 1).

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III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:

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Photography indicates that two spans of the Phu Ly rail bridge were dropped by the 7 November strike (Para. 2). A SAM site 60 miles east of Hanoi was attacked on 8 November. Pilots reported heavy damage to missiles and installations (Para. 3).

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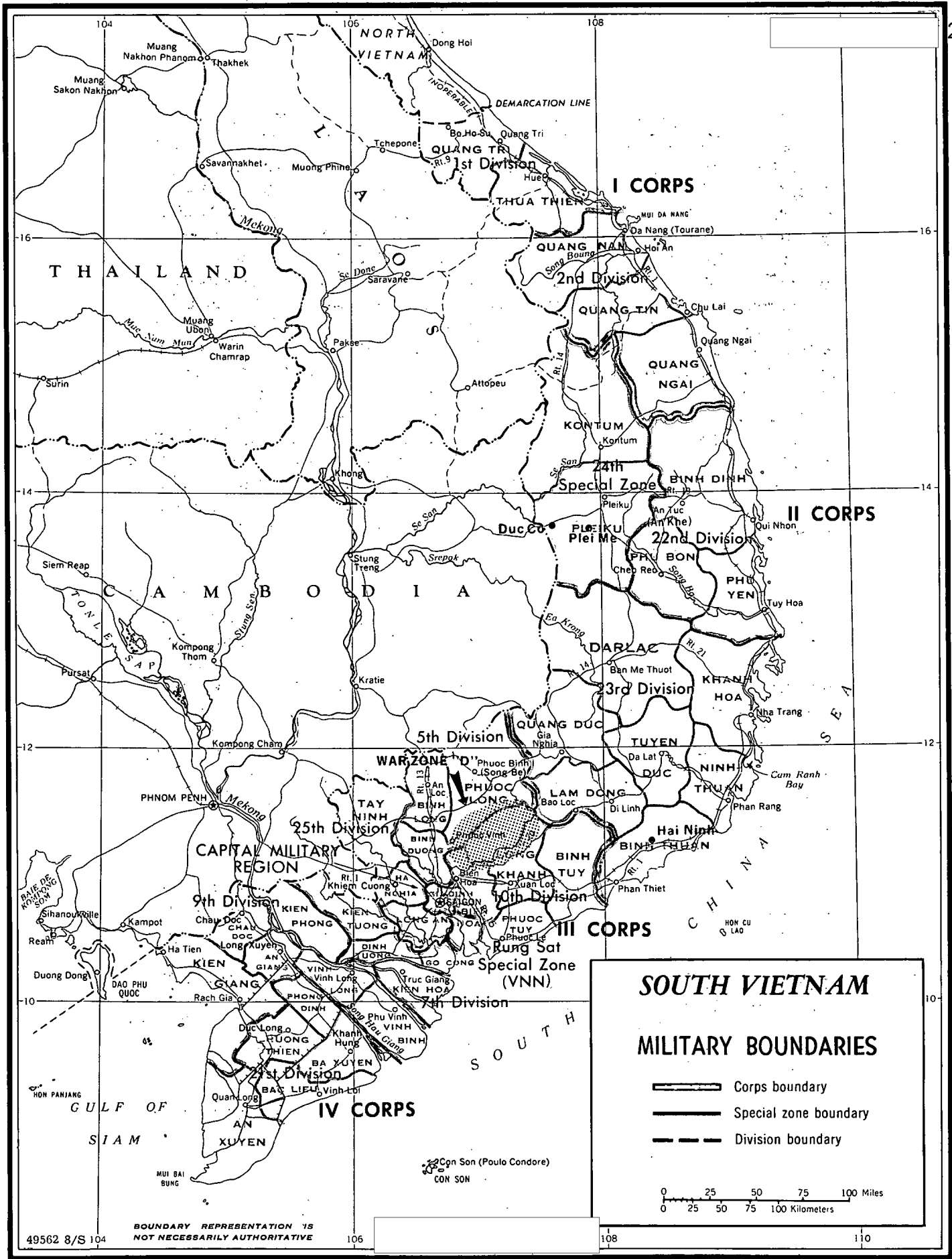
V. Communist Political Developments:

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Peking has used the DRV Foreign Ministry statement of 5 November as a peg upon which to hang a propaganda blast at the US policy on negotiations (Para. 2).

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## I. MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Battalion-strength Viet Cong forces have apparently broken contact with elements of the 1st Brigade/US 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) after a weekend of heavy fighting near the Vietnamese Special Forces camp at Plei Me, in Pleiku Province. Confirmed Communist losses in the latest phase of the 1st Cavalry's "Operation LONG REACH" have been placed at 52 killed and seven captured, including a lieutenant who claimed to be a member of the 32nd PAVN Regiment. An estimated additional 12 Viet Cong were believed killed and 135 wounded, based upon prisoner interrogation and battlefield inspection. US forces sustained casualties of 26 killed and 50 wounded. Late MACV reports indicate that enemy units have disengaged; inclement weather has thus far prevented the medical evacuation of friendly casualties.

2. Operation HUMP, a search-and-destroy ground sweep initiated on 5 November in Bien Hoa Province by paratroop elements of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade and one Australian infantry battalion established heavy contact yesterday with an estimated Viet Cong main force battalion in strongly fortified jungle positions on the fringes of the guerrilla-infested War Zone "D" stronghold. In the day-long battle that ensued, 110 Viet Cong were killed (US body count), against allied casualties of 43 killed (41 US) and 58 wounded (54 US).

3. In Binh Thuan Province, a Communist force estimated at one battalion yesterday attacked and temporarily overran a hamlet garrisoned by 75 Vietnamese paramilitary defenders near the district town of Hai Ninh. Initial friendly casualties were placed at 42 killed, four wounded, and seven missing. ARVN reaction forces, supported by US tactical air strikes, have reportedly regained control of the hamlet.

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4. According to the press, 2nd Lt. Lai Van Cu, the self-proclaimed North Vietnamese political commissar from the 101st Regiment/325th PAVN Division who surrendered to American forces near Plei Me on 7 November, has stated that South Vietnamese propaganda leaflets were instrumental in his defection. The first leaflet discovered by Cu contained a poem allegedly found on the body of a PAVN soldier after the battle at Duc Co during mid-August, questioning the correctness of Northerners coming South to kill fellow Vietnamese. Cu later found a second leaflet offering safe conduct to all who surrender.

5. While the leaflets were probably a motivating factor in his defection, Cu further stated that he was confused by them, and that he questioned their validity. In spite of their content and the special treatment he has received thus far from his US captors, Cu reportedly is unconvinced that the North Vietnamese proclaimed cause of "liberating the South from the yoke of American imperialism" is wrong.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. According to press information, Premier Ky departed by air from Saigon today as scheduled, on a four-day official visit to South Korea. It is still possible that Ky may make an unofficial stop-over in Tokyo on his return to South Vietnam.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPEMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

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2. Bomb damage photography of the Phu Ly rail bridge, located some 30 miles south of Hanoi on the Hanoi-Vinh rail line, indicated that two spans of the bridge have been dropped. This target was attacked on 7 November.

3. Carrier-based US Navy aircraft attacked another SAM site on 8 November. The site is located some 60 miles east of Hanoi. Pilots reported heavily damaging four missiles, four missile launchers, and several buildings.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

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2. Peking has used the 5 November DRV Foreign Ministry statement attacking the US military buildup in Vietnam as the peg upon which to hang another Chinese propaganda blast at the US policy on negotiations. Asserting that the war in Vietnam was a "life and death conflict" and that there could be no peace for Vietnam as long as the US "remained there," the People's Daily editorial on 8 November declared that the recent Viet Cong "victories" at Plei Me, Chu Lai, and Da Nang "are the best answer the Vietnamese people can give to US imperialism's escalation of the war of aggression and its peace talks swindle."

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